SPRING/SUMMER 2003 ISSUE 6

waterfront

The Kennet & Avon Canal

Restoration project completed

Just Ask... about moorings

We've put your questions to the right people

Fisherman's Friends

The National Federation of Anglers

How they used to live

The tough lives of the working boat people

British Waterways

Frontlines

A word from the editor

The Inland Waterways provide a special place to 'get away from it all' - a real haven from the stresses and strains of life today. However, it seems that they weren't always as comforting and tranquil.

On pages 18-19 we hear some chilling tales of years past, as we investigate spine-tingling waterway ghost stories. On pages 6-7 we also explore the hard, and often tragic, lives of the people who both lived and worked on the waterways. 'How they used to live' is the theme for the Crick Boat Show this year, and on pages 14-15 we list a host of other events and festivals taking place around the country.

We are always pleased to receive your many letters. Unfortunately we can't print them all, but to help with burning topical issues we have introduced a new feature, 'Just Ask…'. In this edition we put Sally Ash, BW's Marketing Manager, in the 'hot seat' to answer some of your questions about moorings. See pages 10-11.

Lastly, thank you to everyone who filled out the reader's survey in the last edition. We've highlighted some of the feedback in News in Brief and you will already see some of the comments filtering through in this edition of *Waterfront*.

Enjoy the read!

Nicky Ross
Editor

Boat licence holders will receive the following inserts in *Waterfront:*

- IWA appeal for WRG
- The trial Moorings Code
- 'Go Boating, Stay Safe' CO leaflet

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waterfront

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Front cover picture:
Mr & Mrs Campbell at Braunston on their narrowboat 'Fair Fa'.

The pulp used in the manufacture of this paper is from renewable timber produced on a fully sustainable basis.

The pulp used in the manufacture of this paper is bleached without the use of chlorine gas. (ECF - Elemental Chlorine Free).

This paper is suitable for recycling.

Up Front News in Brief

CORRIE KILLER'S WATERY GRAVE

Notorious Coronation Street killer Richard Hillman's reign of terror came to a watery end in Portland Basin, on the Ashton Canal, in March. In a sensational stunt, co-ordinated by Bond film specialists Bicker Action, he plunged his family car into the depths of the canal – with his wife and her children bound and gagged inside. Hillman's murderous antics had been gripping the nation, with over 15 million viewers tuning in on a regular basis, re-establishing Coronation Street as one of the country's top rating TV programmes.

NEXT STEP ON THE PROPERTY LADDER FOR CRAYFISH

A rare colony of native white-clawed crayfish was moved to a temporary new home in January, to enable essential maintenance works to go ahead. Newbold Tunnel, on the Oxford Canal, underwent an eight-week, £0.5 million, programme of repairs which included stabilising the canal wall with a reinforced concrete ground beam and repairing the Grade II listed tunnel portal, following a series of landslips that had reduced the canal's width.

The crayfish were moved by BW ecologists to an area of canal immediately downstream of the drained section and, because they are a protected species, the works included the provision of a much-improved living environment to secure their future.

NEW LOOK FOR CRAFT LICENCE FEE SHEETS

BW said goodbye to the old 'black book' licence and mooring permit conditions on 31 March. They have been replaced by separate fee and conditions sheets for private long term licences, private short term licences, and business licences. This means there will be a reduction in paper waste and customers will only receive relevant information.

New on the scene is a trial 'Moorings Code'. This follows BW's consultation, which began in May 2002, about how to best discourage boats from overstaying on moorings. The Code is being introduced as a trial during 2003 and boaters invited to give their views before the end of October 2003. The Code is included within the new fees and conditions documents and an explanatory letter and feedback questionnaire is available from BW website www.britishwaterways.co.uk or from the Customer Service Centre 01923 201102. Licence holders will receive a copy with *Waterfront*.

The long-term mooring permit conditions have also been revised following detailed consultation with user groups and will be published as a stand-alone moorings agreement.

WATERWAYS FOR WALES – AN ENGINE FOR REGENERATION

BW has prepared a new consultation document, 'Waterways for Wales', that outlines a programme of waterway improvement schemes capable of transforming many parts of Wales over the next few years.

The document sets out five strategic national schemes, along with 22 possible regional and local projects that will help in areas of community regeneration, access to the countryside, environmental improvements, cultural tourism and lifelong learning.

Examples include a £37 million project to make the Monmouthshire & Brecon Canal completely navigable from Brecon to Newport and create a major marina at Newport, and a £50 million programme to fully restore the Montgomery Canal from Frankton Locks in Shropshire to Freestone Lock near Newtown.

Copies of the report are available from BW's Customer Service Centre on 01923 201120, or can be downloaded from www.britishwaterways.co.uk/wales.

LONDON NARROWBOAT PROJECT 'COMES OF AGE'

The London Narrowboat Project, a voluntarily run, non-profit making charitable project, is celebrating its 21st birthday.

It was formed by a group of teachers, youth workers and canal enthusiasts with the aim of introducing young people, particularly those from inner city or deprived backgrounds, to the joys of canal boating.

The project is based at United Canal Carriers in Braunston, who are in the process of fitting out two new boats to replace the two 70ft narrow boats currently being used. These are due to be launched this Spring.

Each year, from all over the country, more than 1,000 youngsters from youth clubs, schools and colleges, churches and uniformed organisations, and from groups working with the disabled, blind and unemployed, make use of its facilities.

Many of them have benefited enormously from what the project has to offer, and developed a real love for canals and boating.

Visit www.lnbp.co.uk for more information.

LOG BOOK & HIRE BOAT SURVEYS

You may remember back in the Spring/Summer 2002 edition of *Waterfront* that the BW Research Team were inviting boaters to take part in their '2002 Cruising Log Book' project. More than 700 people volunteered to help with the research and the information returned on cruising and levels of boating-related spending was excellent.

As promised at the start of the project, the BW Research Team had a prize draw for boaters taking part in the research. The lucky winners of the draw were Ken and Judy Ludlow from Kidlington, Anthony MacDonald Smith from Knutsford and Tony Woods from Liverpool, all of whom win a BW boat licence.

Another survey, the Hire Boat Survey, was handed out to a random sample of 5,000 hire boaters over the 2002 boating season. The survey's aim was to gather information about the hire boaters' holiday experience and use this information to improve the hire boat holidays of the future. The Survey received almost 1,000 replies and from these Stephen Lupton was chosen as the lucky winner of a short boating break for four people with the Viking Afloat Hire Boat Company.

OIL DISCHARGE REMINDER

Boaters in the Nottingham area may have seen signs for 'Oil Care'. This is a joint initiative with the Environment Agency to reduce oil pollution in the inland waterways.

In order to avoid oil pollution from boats, boaters are being reminded of the importance of keeping oil as far as possible from their bilge pumps. The BSS requires boats to be fitted with a drip tray, or a suitable alternative means of separation, and it is important that these are checked regularly and accumulations removed and properly disposed of.

Oil filters can make a very effective extra line of defence, and are now being promoted as an addition to the BSS requirements, even though they are no substitute for a well-maintained leak free engine and the cartridges need to be replaced on a regular basis.

More information on oil filter suppliers is available from the Boat Safety Scheme on 01923 201278, or email bss.enquiries@boatsafetyscheme.com

NEW COMMERCIAL DIRECTOR FOR BW

Following Robin Evans' move to the role of Chief Executive, BW has appointed a new Commercial Director. James Froomberg, previously Director of Corporate Development for Wembley plc, took up the post on 24 March 2003.

WAP IT!

BW has introduced a new service for WAP mobile phone users. Stoppage information can now be viewed on www.britishwaterways.co.uk/mobile

NEW USER SAFETY GUIDANCE DOCUMENTS

BW has produced the first of a number of guidance documents aimed at boat owners and their contractors wishing to carry out work in dry docks or dry storage areas that it manages. The document provides an overview of common issues and how to minimise risk in such areas, along with forms to be completed by those wishing to carry out work.

It is supplemented by management procedures that allow BW managers to programme the use of these sites in order to maximise their use whilst minimising the risk of accidents and incidents.

Copies are available from Jane Santler, Safety Team, BW, Willow Grange, Church Road, Watford WD17 4QA.

NATIONAL OUTDOOR WEEK

National Outdoor Week, 3–11 May 2003, will be the biggest celebration of the great outdoors in Britain this year and with more than 2,000 miles of canals and rivers to offer, BW will be joining the campaign.

Hundreds of events from walking to canoeing, and cycling to mountaineering will be running from 3–11 May, giving everyone the opportunity to try an activity they might never have tried before.

The aim of the initiative, which is supported by organisations including The Countryside Agency, The National Trust, The Ramblers Association, Youth Hostels Association and Sustrans is to raise awareness of just how much the British countryside has to offer.

NOW!
National Outdoor Week
3–11 May 2003

Early May is the perfect time to step out onto the towpath to discover some of the country's most beautiful and tranquil water scenes. To help whet your appetite even further and tempt you into the open there are a host of canalside festivals and events taking place throughout the country during the first May Bank Holiday. Take a look at our events guide on pages 14-15 for further details.

Visit the National Outdoor Week website www.outdoorweek.org.uk to find out more.

CARBON MONOXIDE ADVICE

The Boat Safety Scheme (BSS) team is asking boat crews to check their fuel burning appliances for cracks, leaking seals and blockages that might cause carbon monoxide (CO) to escape into the cabin space. The reminder comes after recent deaths linked to the use of solid fuel stoves on boats.

"Burning gas, coal, wood or oil can produce carbon monoxide, so make sure that an experienced and competent person has checked your appliance and its flue. Always use the correct grade of fuel for the stove or heater and finally don't block your high or low-level ventilation. It's your lifesaver," said Graham Watts, BSS manager.

More information on avoiding harm from CO gas and other safety information is available from BW's Customer Service Centre on 01923 201120 or the BSS office on 01923 201278. Alternatively visit www.boatsafetyscheme.com

BW AT NO 77 IN SUNDAY TIMES TOP 100

We at *Waterfront* knew it all along, but now it's official - BW really is a great place to work! In February BW became one of only two public sector bodies to be awarded a place in the Sunday Times 100 Best Companies to Work For list, coming in at position number 77. We all know that happy, well-motivated people are more productive and more committed, and this is certainly true of BW.

Part of the selection process, a confidential employee survey sent to 500 randomly selected employees across the country, found that 83% of BW people are happy in their jobs, and a massive 92% feel positive about BW's work.

BW chief executive, Robin Evans, said "These results are excellent. I believe that what sets BW apart as a great place to work is the sense of pride pervading the organisation."

WATERFRONT SURVEY

Pete Chamberlain, APCO's Lock keeper of the Year picked out the winner's of *Waterfront* reader's survey. Congratulations to Mr & Mrs Seddon of Lincolnshire, Chris Mountain of Skipton, north Yorkshire, Mr J Cotton of Staffordshire, James Murphy of Anglesey and D Hempstock of Hull. Many thanks to everyone who completed and returned their reader survey forms, the response was fantastic.

Here are a selection of comments and suggestions, good and bad:

"More historical items and old photographs in Then & Now please."

"Save our licence money - produce it more cheaply or not at all."

"I found Around the World, Canals at the Cutting Edge and The Dave Years interesting. Keep Waterfront coming."

"More on wildlife or protection of habitats."

"Increase publications to 4 or 6 times per year."

l-r: Pete Chamberlain and Waterway Supervisor Bob Gee

AWASH WITH AWARDS

2002 was quite a year, with BW being nominated for a host of awards – and even winning a few! Here are details of just a selection…

Scotland's Millennium Link and the Gateways to Newark riverside renewal both won best practice in regeneration awards from the British Urban Regeneration Association. The Millennium Link project was also awarded The Silver Jubilee Cup, the UK's most prestigious planning award, in January this year.

The Falkirk Wheel picked up three awards. It won the Silver Unicorn Award for the best new tourism project prize at the British Guild of Travel Writers annual tourism awards, the Scottish Civil Engineering Project of the Year at the Saltire Society's civil engineering awards, and was awarded the Brunel Medal for excellence in Civil Engineering by the Institution of Civil Engineers. Two of the three national awards given by the Institution of Civil Engineers 2002 Historic Bridge and Infrastructure awards were given to BW schemes, namely Anderton Boat Lift and the Huddersfield Narrow Canal.

Tom Rowe, Waterway Manager South Pennine Ring, who oversaw the £55 million Huddersfield Narrow and Rochdale restorations was awarded one of the three runners up prizes in the national final for the Institution of Civil Engineers Manager of 2002.

Finally, the Boater's Handbook, a free publication aimed at everyone from holidaymakers and recreational boaters to more experienced boaters, offering advice on boating safety on the inland waterways, won the prestigious Plain English Award from the Plain English Campaign. Copies are available from BW's Customer Service Centre tel: 01923 201120 or email: enquiries.hq@britishwaterways.co.uk

HOW THEY USED TO LIVE

Crick Boat Show is always one of the highlights of the inland waterway calendar. From the wide range of boats on show around the colourful marina, to events, stalls and activities on dry land there's always plenty to explore and discover. This year there will be a special element to the show reflected in one of its main themes, 'How They Used To Live'. Visitors will have the opportunity to find out more about the working boat people, whose stories and experiences played a central role in the history and traditions of our waterway network. *Waterfront* takes a look at their hardy and often tough lives.

Everyone with an interest in waterways will happily admit that a key element of the appeal is the romantic notion of life afloat on a brightly painted, traditional narrowboat. The reality for the families who lived and worked on the network in the last two centuries must have been very different.

Not for them the luxury of space afforded by the modern holiday cruiser or custom designed narrowboat. Instead it was not unusual for couples with perhaps four or five children to live in the cramped confines of a backcabin measuring 7ft by 7ft, while precious space in the hold was given over to cargo.

Various theories have been put forward about the origins of the canal boat people. It has been suggested that they were gypsies or navvies or even ex-sailors. These ideas are questionable. In the very earliest days the families of boatmen lived ashore while the men made daily or weekly runs. It's unlikely that gypsy families would have settled in cottages while their men were out afloat.

Roistering navvies would have found regular boat work dull and sailors usually came from seaside villages, towns and ports and would have returned there. There's no tradition of nautical terminology on the canals and the biggest insult you could offer to a working boatman would have been to call him a sailor!

The majority of boatmen were probably village farm labourers who became unemployed because of changes to traditional English farming in the late 18th and 19th centuries. At the same time the Industrial Revolution was changing the face of working life in the country and newly built canals were the main transport arteries feeding increasingly prosperous towns and cities.

Although work on the boats was hard, the pay was good compared to that of factory and agricultural workers and, in the early days, the standard of living enjoyed by the narrowboat families was good.

But rising competition from the railways brought about a dramatic change in circumstances. To compete with rail, the carrying companies cut their men's wages and those who had bought their own boats and set up as small carriers (Number Ones) were the hardest hit of all.

To save wages in the 1840s whole families left their cottages and moved into tiny boat backcabins that had never been intended as permanent living space. Wives and children now found themselves toiling alongside the menfolk – and it was back breaking work.

Because these families had known some measure of prosperity, women took their most treasured possessions with them. Into these little, cramped spaces they packed the plates, lustre ware, patchwork quilts, polished brass and cage birds that had decorated their cottages. From about this time the narrowboats, which had always carried the bright livery of various carrying companies, were also decorated with the 'roses and castles' motifs familiar today.

Within 30 years the once prosperous boatmen and their families had become some of the poorest and most neglected people in the country.

Because the families were constantly on the move children rarely received any formal schooling. Many of the women could not cope with life in the tiny backcabins, especially with four, five and sometimes more small children. Conditions became insanitary and accidents were common. Many children drowned each year and many more died of contagious diseases such as smallpox, typhoid and cholera.

With speed a necessity, boatmen had no chance to rest, not even on Sundays. There was no chance for church, education, cleanliness or even properly cooked food. Nourishment was

TO SAVE WAGES IN THE 1840s WHOLE FAMILIES LEFT THEIR COTTAGES AND MOVED INTO TINY BOAT BACKCABINS THAT HAD NEVER BEEN INTENDED AS PERMANENT LIVING SPACE.

often scavenged from the canalside (poaching was common). Surviving records indicate that diet was haphazard, with one family's recipe book including instructions for a 'six rook pie'!

In 1877, the Canal Boat Act was passed. An amendment was passed in 1881 and in 1884 a second Canal Boat Act appointed an inspector under the Local Government Board.

Slowly the boat people's lives began to improve. Although many children remained illiterate, general conditions and hours of work were eased. Gradually the boaters' pride in their trade and their craft returned; the decorated boats and unique clothes took on a new symbolic meaning for their owners. Our romantic image of traditional boating life including bright clothes, elaborate bonnets for the women, 'Roses & Castles' and waterway songs and dances largely dates from the 1890s onwards.

Conditions continued to improve steadily as the canal carrying companies began to recognise their responsibilities, including the provision of schooling, but ultimately this picturesque and apparently idyllic way of life was doomed by the modern world, rising standards of living and the decline of the waterway freight trade. By the late 1950s there were practically no canal families still living afloat in the old way.

Moving onto today and times have certainly changed. There are more and more people from all walks of life choosing narrowboats for a home, as well as for pleasure.

If you would like to find out more about these unique people and their lives, visit Crick Boat Show 2003. The event takes place over the second May Bank Holiday Weekend, 24-26 May.

For more details about the show go to www.crickboatshow.com

Clockwise: Limehouse Cut on the Regent's Canal; Tiny cramped cabins were brightened with ribboned lace, plates and brassware; The Grand Union Canal at the turn of the century; Children from the Powell family on the Grand Union Canal just before the First World War.

“THIS IS MY PATCH” THE LLANGOLLEN CANAL

The Llangollen Canal is a 45-mile waterway which crosses the Anglo-Welsh border. Fed by the River Dee at Llantisilio, and eventually joining the Shropshire Union Canal, this picturesque waterway passes through historic villages and delightful countryside.

Howard Griffiths, BW Waterway Supervisor on the Llangollen Canal, was more than happy to introduce Gillian Owen, from *Waterfront*, to ‘his patch’.

HOWARD’S WAY

Howard has always known the waterways life. His father was a canalman before him, and he has worked on the Border Counties canals for 24 years. He initially worked as a canalman and foreman on the Montgomery Canal, and then later moved on to the Llangollen Canal, where for the last three years he’s been the waterway supervisor.

With a wealth of information and advice to share about his patch, Howard is the perfect person to tell me about the things to see and do on the Llangollen Canal. “Over the patch there are twenty-one locks, three tunnels, two aqueducts, a viaduct, and plenty of lift bridges to keep boaters busy - not to mention all the interesting places to see along the bank” explains Howard.

Howard agrees to show me his favourite route along the canal, and points out the areas of interest along the way. “I think the Llangollen is the best canal, there’s so much to see, although I may be slightly biased!” says Howard before we start our tour.

ANYONE FOR ICE CREAM?

We begin at Hurleston, the junction of the Llangollen and Shropshire Union Canals. A short walk along a country trail from the towpath at Hurleston is the Snugberry Ice Cream Factory, which Howard claims is well worth a visit to sample one of the many flavoured ice creams. Back on the canal we continue our journey passing through the village of Burland and on to Wrenbury. “Wrenbury is a very picturesque country village, and it’s definitely worth stopping to take a look at the old church and call in at one of the two pubs right next to the canal, the ‘Dusty Millar’ or the ‘Cotton Arms’. You’ll need all your strength soon afterwards for the flight of six locks at Grindley Brook - they get very busy in the summer with up to 100 boats a day passing through,” advises Howard. Grindley Brook is also the place to stock up on local produce at the lock side store that also doubles up as an Internet café.

NATURE LOVER’S DREAM

Moving along, passing by the market town of Whitchurch and the Whitchurch Arm of the Llangollen Canal, the next place of interest that Howard recommends stopping at is a must for nature lovers. The southern end of the Prees Branch of the canal is now classified as a SSSI (a Site of Special Scientific Interest) and contains numerous species of rare aquatic plants and animals. “During summer it’s a good idea to have a walk through Whixall Moss, a national nature reserve. It really is beautiful with all the wildflowers in bloom and unusual insects to see.”

THE LUCKY CANAL

We find ourselves at Ellesmere where the canal passes the BW yard where Howard and his team are based. Although the repair yard is not open to the public you can still get a glimpse of what goes on from the towpath, as well as a chance to marvel at the round room of the canalside house, where the famous Thomas Telford created his designs for the Pontcysyllte Aqueduct. Ellesmere is a small, pretty market town dating back to Saxon times. "It's a bustling place in the summer and on Tuesdays, which is market day, the town can get quite busy. A good time to visit is during the Ellesmere festival; it's a boat gathering, with lots of other events going on. We open the boatyard so everyone can come and have a look round. It's a very popular event, and this year the festival will be held on the 12th - 14th September" Howard tells me.

Moving on we see Frankton Junction, where the Montgomery Canal joins the Llangollen. Restoration works are underway and Howard tells me a bit about the history of the Llangollen Canal. He explains, "The Llangollen Canal was lucky; when other canals were left to fall into disrepair the Llangollen was already being used to transfer drinking water to the towns of Crewe and Nantwich, saving it from becoming a redundant waterway."

ENTERING WALES

We head off towards the Welsh section of the canal, passing the 'Narrowboat' and 'Jack Myttons' waterside pubs. Just a short walk from the towpath you can reach the historic castle town of Chirk. The canal then passes over Chirk Aqueduct and through Chirk Tunnel into Wales.

Howard tells me, "The Welsh section is home to my favourite place on the canal, the Pontcysyllte Aqueduct. It's a magnificent structure that never ceases to amaze me. Just how would you start such a huge project? The craftsmanship is brilliant; you can look up at the masonry and it's still perfect after all these years."

A word of warning to anyone crossing over the aqueduct - don't look down if you aren't too keen on heights! "You sometimes see people lying on the bottom of their boats as they cross, too scared to look - but they are missing out on some wonderful views," Howard says.

LLANGOLLEN AND THE END OF THE JOURNEY

The canal then continues to Llangollen, home of the world famous Eisteddfod, an international music festival that takes place every July. There are also museums and historic houses to see, as well as trip boats along the canal. "The area is so beautiful - my favourite views along the canal are from this area, out over the Vale of Llangollen and to the mountains beyond," says Howard.

Reaching Llangollen is the end of the stretch and the end of my tour. Howard tells me "I'm very lucky to work on such a wonderful waterway. I work with a really friendly, hardworking team. We're all very proud of our patch and hope that you've enjoyed discovering the Llangollen Canal."

If, like me, you would like to find our more information on the Llangollen Canal please contact BW's Border Counties Office on 01244 390372.

Clockwise: Howard Griffiths, Waterway Supervisor for the Llangollen Canal; Chirk Aqueduct; Boats travelling through Pentre; Admiring the view on the Pontcysyllte Aqueduct.

JUST ASK... MOORINGS

***Waterfront* wants to tackle current issues ... our new feature 'Just ask' puts the questions you're asking to the right people.**

This edition we talk to Sally Ash, BW's Marketing Manager about moorings for boats.

Sally has worked for BW for 26 years in various roles, including running an overseas marketing consortium with the hire boat trade during the 1980s. She is now responsible for managing BW's craft licensing department, as well as general marketing activities. She has never owned a boat, but has taken regular boating holidays since the age of nine, and has belonged to the IWA and the Kennet & Avon Canal Trust for many years.

So firstly, why are there rules about moorings?

We know that most people value the waterways for the sense of freedom they inspire, and we're actually conscious of the importance of protecting this. We never introduced rules lightly, but as boating becomes ever more popular, the need for an orderly framework becomes more obvious. As responsible managers, we have to avoid a 'free for all' in which boats are moored up for long periods of time at places where others want to stop, or where it could cause operational problems.

What would you say are the main rules?

If you don't take your boat out of the water whenever you're not using it, you need a home mooring for it – a 'place where it can lawfully be kept' (British Waterways Act 1995). People who continuously cruise don't need a home mooring because they are using their boat for navigation all the time.

As far as temporary mooring is concerned the *Licence Conditions* say you can moor 'ancillary to cruising'. That means you can stay in the same place for up to 14 days at a time.

But what about all those boats that don't have a permanent mooring, but don't seem to continuously cruise either?

There is a growing problem in areas of the country where high house prices tempt people to live afloat, but they can't find or are not prepared to pay for a mooring. Following nine months of consultation, we've just produced a new trial *Moorings Code* that makes the rules clearer. It will provide clear guidance on how to meet the requirements of the 1995 Act and will help us better manage those that choose to misuse the licence and mooring system.

Boat licence holders will receive the code with their copy of *Waterfront*, alternatively copies are available from BW Customer Service Centre.

So tell me, how does BW set its mooring prices?

Our local managers research their local moorings market, comparing prices and facilities offered elsewhere in the vicinity and the length of their waiting lists, and then make a judgement. It's not an exact science and we ask them to discuss their plans in advance with local user groups and be prepared to justify their conclusions. But at the end of the day, it has to be a business decision. We're required by government to operate commercially.

Why have moorings become so expensive?

If you compare mooring prices on the inland waterways with coastal marinas, they're quite reasonable. Coastal marinas, particularly on the south coast, have an average price of £1040 per year for a 10 metre boat (often with extra service charges) compared to an average of £613 for a BW mooring.

It is market demand that determines prices and that is why many moorings prices have risen above inflation recently. It is important to judge the price of moorings on value for money criteria. We believe our mooring charges do offer good value for money.

What is BW doing to address the shortage of moorings on its waterways?

There hasn't been sufficient investment in new mooring sites to match the increase in boat numbers on the waterways. There are many reasons for this, from local planning constraints to lack of profitability for investors.

In light of this we've commissioned our Waterway Conservation and Regeneration group (WCRg) to help waterway managers identify opportunities and find ways around some of the constraints to increasing investment. We are keen to encourage private companies to increase moorings provision and will share the results of the WCRg work with them.

But surely BW has a monopoly over moorings on its waterways!

We estimate that BW is responsible for just under a quarter of the total number of individual mooring berths available on our waterways. In addition we estimate that there are mooring berths for 22,000 boats on waterways that BW is not responsible for.

How much growth is there in boating on BW's waterways?

Over the past ten years, the number of boats licensed has increased by nearly

l - r: Sally Ash, BW's Marketing Manager at Springwell Lock on the Grand Union Canal; A boat moored at Middlewich on the Trent & Mersey Canal

2% every year. Today there are some 24,000 privately owned boats and around 2,300 business craft (hire and trip boats, commercial trading boats etc). The total of over 26,300 compares with just 8,291 in 1963, the year that BW was founded.

How much do mooring fees contribute to the upkeep of the waterways?

It costs BW £185 million each year to run the network. In 2001-02 income from moorings was approximately £4.2 million (2.3% of total income). Our main sources of income are from commercial ventures, government and other grants.

Why do I have to pay a mooring fee if I keep my boat at the end of my own garden?

Although BW doesn't own the land you're tied up to, it does manage the water you float on and the land beneath it. What you're paying for is the right to occupy this water space to the exclusion of all other boats.

I've heard about a new processing system for licences & mooring permits, tell me more?

BW has just installed a new computer system, SAP, to help us work more effectively, and yes, this does include a new system for craft licensing and moorings. We will start to see lots of benefits including a faster turn around of licences and mooring permits with less, but more informative, documentation. Eventually well be able to process licence and mooring applications at local waterway offices. Data will be shared amongst all BW offices helping us improve our efficiency as well as track licence evaders.

With the new system, mooring permits and licences have to be processed separately. This means that even if renewals are concurrent, they will be invoiced separately. There is a new look to the terms and conditions. The old 'black book' that contained conditions for both licences and mooring permits is being replaced with separate agreements. Later in the year, boaters will receive a moorings contract that sets out obligations on both sides.

And will there be the same changes to the mooring payment arrangements as for licences?

Yes, we're changing the direct debit terms in the same way, and boaters will only qualify for the prompt payment discount if they actually pay the whole cost in advance. On the plus side, we're offering more flexible time periods – permits can be purchased for anything between one and twelve complete months. Each month costs one tenth of the annual fee.

What other plans does BW have for moorings?

We want to improve the quality of our service to mooring customers. During the past few months we've completed some research into what attributes of a mooring are most important, and this has helped us to prepare a star rating scheme for mooring sites, as promised by our then chief executive, Dave Fletcher, last year. We plan to announce this shortly and encourage private operators to make use of it too. In addition we've tested a quality audit system for use within BW that involves independent inspection of mooring sites, covering everything from towpath potholes and dripping taps to cleanliness of toilets and staff knowledge.

Where can I find more information about moorings, mainly to compare prices and facilities?

We're still developing our national moorings database which currently sits within our website. It includes the name and location of every mooring site on our network. Our aim is for it to show the price and facilities available at all mooring sites. We are helping the British Marine Federation with a major national audit of inland and coastal moorings. This will help us to complete the details for privately operated sites and make it available to everyone. Boaters will be able to compare prices and facilities across the country. In the meantime some of the waterways magazines publish excellent annual reviews of mooring sites.

If you have any burning issues you want us to put to the right people write to Just Ask, *Waterfront* Magazine, BW, Willow Grange Church Road, Watford WD17 4QA or email waterfront@britishwaterways.co.uk

A DAY IN THE LIFE OF THE **LEELA O'DEA** ECOLOGIST, FRADLEY

Not only is Leela O'Dea an Environmental Project Officer for BW at Fradley Junction, she is also a part-time student, studying Biological Recording for a Masters degree. Her quest is to get people interested in, appreciative of, and respecting the environment – and she does this with flying colours. *Waterfront's* Louise Jones managed to find some time in Leela's busy diary to spend a day with her.

When I arrived at Shenton Embankment on the Ashby Canal to meet Leela she had just been meeting with colleagues Glyn Stewart and Craig Windsor. Glyn is an ecologist for BW's engineering contractors in the Midlands - Morrisons, whilst Craig is on a 3-month work placement, with Leela as his mentor.

Leela and Glyn often work closely together on engineering projects in the area and their current brief involves producing a Vegetation Management Plan for Shenton Embankment. "A Vegetation Management Plan is exactly what it says it is" Leela tells me, "it's a plan to help us look after all the green stuff."

This is necessary as Shenton Embankment dates back to the 1790s, therefore requiring regular inspections to check its stability. The aim is to increase the visibility of the embankment by managing the thick vegetation.

Before the embankment is opened up for the inspection, Leela needs to carry out a tree survey to check and clear dangerous trees. BW has an Environmental Code of Practice (ECP) which helps Leela do this. "The ECP is a structured list which is designed to raise issues, provide key information and prompt action" explains Leela. "It doesn't really prescribe a particular course of action, but requires us to apply our judgement to determine what impacts are likely to be significant, what level of environmental appraisal is appropriate, and what measures should be taken to achieve solutions. It basically gives us direction and some consistency in what we are doing."

Leela and Glyn have consulted the ECP and have decided on a course of action for each tree or group of trees. This includes clearing felling the more dangerous trees and pollarding and coppicing the others.

I follow Leela and Glyn, and watch as they examine the surrounding vegetation to ensure that there is minimal disturbance to wildlife. Badger setts are checked and Leela offers advice on 'pest' control for species such as rabbits, as they have already caused some damage to the embankment's surface by creating pockets of erosion.

"I'll also endeavour to make sure the best habitat is retained and where necessary will create alternative habitats" says Leela.

So how did Leela arrive at where she is today? "I went to Fradley on a temporary contract to write a management plan for the Ashby Canal (a Site of Special Scientific Interest) for English Nature as they were looking at protecting aquatic plants. That was 1 1/2 years ago, and like many people at BW I loved it so much I ended up staying!"

Clockwise: Leela doing research at the office; Leela collecting White-Clawed Crayfish on the Ashby Canal near to Carlton; Leela starts her day.

Leela's role doesn't stop at the canal; she is also heavily involved in communicating her ideas and the importance of the local environment.

The aquatic plants that have been declining on the Ashby Canal over the past decade are Charaphytes, a form of stonewort, and Potamogetons, a form of pond-weed. Last year, Leela and her team made a conscious effort to prevent any further decline.

"We attempted to reduce the amount of shade on the waterway and the amount of silt on the canal bed" says Leela. "Dredging small sections of approximately one kilometre seemed to be an ideal solution for both boats and flora. Increasing the waterway channel allows boats more room to navigate therefore they'll churn up less silt, which reduces the impact on the plant life and retains a natural seed bed."

Leela recently organised some hedge-laying at Sutton Cheney Wharf, near Leicester on the Ashby Canal. On my visit we stopped off to see the site. "This project started in mid January this year and will be complete by mid February" says Leela. "On the first weekend alone 10 volunteers completed our hedge-laying course and six more people turned up to help out, including some of the Ashby Canal Association members." And things seem bright for subsequent sessions with 12 volunteers already signed up for the next hedge-laying course.
"We managed to secure a Shire Grant from Leicestershire" says Leela. The grant helped to pay for the courses and the environmentally friendly materials that Leela had to ensure they would use. Recycled plastic staging was used for the new moorings which were built over a reed fringe, and new interpretation boards will be made out of British timber from a sustainable source. Leela is now hoping to develop Fradley reservoir and is awaiting the outcome of a funding bid application.

Leela's role doesn't stop at the canal; she is also heavily involved in communicating her ideas and the importance of the local environment. She helps to raise awareness of the issues associated with her job in various ways. She writes for local magazines and helps to produce leaflets. She also gives talks to different organisations ranging from the Women's Institute to an International Guide camp.

One and half years into the job and Leela is still enjoying every minute of it. "It's so diverse, varying so much each week" she says "I find it really interesting especially because I'm very much involved in advising people and implementing decisions."

I leave Leela, still hard at work making sure the environment is top of the agenda – and after spending a day in her life it's definitely now become top of mine!

Waterway Events & Festivals 2003

Listed here is just a selection of the vast number of events and festivals taking place on or around the waterways this year. Please note that details are correct as far as we know at the time of going to press, however we strongly recommend that you check in advance.

	EVENT	DATE	DESCRIPTION	LOCATION	CONTACT
APRIL	Easter Eggsplosion	12th - 27th	Easter family fun	Standedge Visitor Centre	01484 844298
	Easter Madness	14th - 25th	Easter family fun	Anderton Boat Lift	01606 872868
	Annual Canoe Race	18th - 21st	Canoe race	Westminster to Devizes	01225 705641
	Boliners & Butties	18th - 21st	Boat gathering	The Boat Museum, Ellesmere Port	0151 355 5017
	Easter Bunny Visits the Falkirk Wheel!	20th	Easter family fun	The Falkirk Wheel	01324 619888
	Mon & Brec and Abergavenny fun day	20th	Easter family fun	14 Locks Canal Centre, Newport	02920 888681
	Cuckoo Day Celebrations	26th	Annual festival	Standedge Visitor Centre	01484 844298
MAY	Rally at Langley Mill - 30th Anniversary	2nd	Annual rally	Langley Mill Basin, Erewash Canal	01623 621208
	Stoke Bruerne Museum 40th Birthday	2nd - 5th	Celebrations	Stoke Bruerne Museum	01604 862229
	International Street Arts Festival	3rd	Fun for all the family	The Falkirk Wheel	01324 619888
	Five Locks Rally	3rd - 4th	Annual rally	Five Locks, Cwmbran	02920 888681
	IWA Canalway Cavalcade	3rd - 5th	Annual boat gathering	Little Venice, Regents Canal	07970 835523
	Oxford Canal Walking Weekend	3rd - 5th	Guided walking tours	A variety of locations on the Oxford Canal	01788 890666
	Royal Leamington Spa Canal Carnival	3rd - 5th	Canal festival	Royal Leamington Spa, Grand Union Canal	01926 450906
	Skipton Waterway Festival	3rd - 5th	Canal festival	Skipton, Leeds & Liverpool Canal	01274 611303
	Standedge Festival	3rd - 6th	Canal festival	Standedge Visitor Centre	01484 844298
	Crafty Craft Race	5th	Annual Charity event	Newbury, Kennet & Avon Canal	01635 45036
	Family Fun Day	5th	Fun for all the family	Lancaster, Lancaster Canal	01524 751888
	Great Glen Raid	10th - 17th	International boat race	Fort William	01463 713504
	Ashby Canal Festival	17th - 18th	Canal festival	Moira, Ashby Canal	01530 273956
	Rickmansworth Canal Festival	17th - 19th	Canal festival	Batchworth Lock, Rickmansworth	01923 778382
	Dragon Boat Regatta	18th	Regatta	CLIC, Gloucester Docks	01452 722189
	K&A celebrates 40yrs of restoration	23rd - 25th	Celebrations	Various sites along Kennet & Avon Canal	01380 722859
	Lancaster Canal Boat Club	23rd - 25th	Annual rally	Lancaster, Lancaster Canal	01524 751888
	The Falkirk Wheel First Birthday	24th	Celebrations	The Falkirk Wheel	01324 619888
	Worcester Regatta	24th	Regatta	Sabrina Bridge, River Severn	01886 833436
	Nuneaton Canal Festival	24th - 25th	Canal festival	Nuneaton, Coventry Canal	01283 790236
	Crick Boat Show	24th - 26th	Annual boat festival	Crick Marina, Grand Union Canal	01788 890666
	IWA Boat Gathering	24th - 26th	Boat gathering	Bootle, Leeds & Liverpool Canal	01695 572389
	Tring Canal Festival	25th - 26th	Annual canal festival	New Mill, Tring, Grand Union Canal	01442 825938
JUNE	Newark On Water	6th - 8th	Community arts festival	Newark, River Trent	01636 655765
	Blowers Green Pumphouse Open Day	7th - 8th	Fun for all the family	Blowers Green Pumphouse, Dudley Canal	01384 236275
	Bulbourne Tours	11th	Evening tours	Bulbourne Workshop, Near Tring	01442 822261
	Middlewich Folk & Boat Festival	13th - 15th	Local community festival	Middlewich	01782 785703
	Mersey River Festival	13th - 16th	Waterside festival	Albert Docks	01257 481054
	Toys for the Boys!	15th	A day dedicated to dads	The Falkirk Wheel	01324 619888
	An uplifting experience for all Fathers	15th	Fun for all the family	Anderton Boat Lift	01606 872868
	Fathers Day at Standedge	15th	Fun for all the family	Standedge Visitor Centre	01484 844298
	Evening Guided Walk	16th	Guided walk	Oldbury Locks, Titford Canal	0121 559 0747
	Sowerby Bridge Open Day	21st	Fun for all the family	Sowerby Bridge	01977 554351
	BCN Treasure Hunt	21st - 22nd	Fun for all the family	Birmingham Canal Navigation - various points	01785 824012
	Bedford On Water Extravaganza	21st - 22nd	Fun for all the family	Bedford, Great Ouse	01234 351931
	Nantwich Boat Rally	21st - 22nd	Boat rally	Nantwich, Shropshire Union Canal	01244 390372
	Reading Water Festival	21st - 22nd	Fun for all the family	Reading	0118 939 4072
	Whaley Water Weekend	21st - 22nd	Fun for all the family	Whaley Bridge Basin, Peak Forest Canal	01782 785703
	Dragon Boat Racing	22nd	Annual charity boat race	Barnby Dun Bridge	01302 340610
	Summer Specials at the Falkirk Wheel	28th - 17th Aug	Fun for all the family	The Falkirk Wheel	01324 619888
	Stainforth Festival	28th	Local festival	Stainforth, Leeds & Liverpool Canal	01302 340610
	WOW Water Racket Event	28th	Children's fun day	Ellesmere Port Boat Museum	01606 723829
	Castleford Heritage Festival	29th - 30th	Fun for all the family	Thwaite Mills, Leeds	01977 554351
	Oxford Canal Festival	29th	Annual canal festival	Oxford City, Oxford Canal	01788 891555
	Teddy Bear's Picnic	29th	Children's fun day	Standedge Visitor Centre	01484 844298

	EVENT	DATE	DESCRIPTION	LOCATION	CONTACT
JULY	Saul Junction Festival	4th - 6th	Annual boat gathering	Saul Junction	01452 318048
	Ware River Festival & Carnival	5th - 6th	Annual canal festival	Ware Priory, Ware	01920 460316
	Eisteddfod Festival	7th - 13th	International music festival	Llangollen, Llangollen Canal	01244 390372
	Braunston Boat Gathering	8th - 9th	Annual boat gathering	Braunston	01788 891555
	Bulbourne Heritage Open Day	12th	Open day	Near Tring, Grand Union Canal	01442 822261
	Wigan Jazz Festival	12th - 19th	Local music event	Wigan Pier	01257 481054
	Phew! A Steamy Weekend	13th	Celebration of steam	The Falkirk Wheel	01324 619888
	Watford Rainbow Festival	13th	Local event	Cassiobury Park, Watford	01442 825938
	Leeds on Water	18th - 20th	Local event	Thaite Mill Industrial Museum	01977 554351
	Inland Waterway Exhibition	25th - 27th	National exhibition	Birmingham	01283 742950
	Traditional Boat Gathering	25th - 27th	Boat gathering	Dundas, Kennet & Avon Canal	01225 447276
	Anderton Boat Lift Anniversary	26th	Anniversary celebration	Anderton Boat Lift	01606 872868
	Aria Grand Fireworks Concert	26th	Local concert	Hull Marina	01482 330506
	Gloucester on Water	27th	Local event	Gloucester Docks	01452 318000
	Waterway to Spend a Day!	27th	Fun for all the family	Earth Centre, Conisbrough	01302 340610
	WOW Water Racket Event	27th	Children's fun day	Gloucester Waterways Museum	01606 723829
	Children's Art & Craft Workshop	30th - 27th Aug	Children's fun days	Anderton Boat Lift	01606 872868
	Sea Shanty	27th	Fun for all the family	Keadby Moorings	01302 340610
AUGUST	Acting Workshops	4th - 29th	Fun days	Standedge Visitor Centre	01484 844298
	Bulbourne Tours	6th	Daytime tours	Near Tring, Grand Union Canal	01442 822261
	Three Mills Rally of Boats	8th - 9th	Annual boat rally	Three Mills Island, Bromley-by-Bow	01992 702200
	Brecon Jazz Festival Boat Gathering	9th - 10th	Trust boat gathering	Mon & Brecon Canal	02920 888681
	Standedge Craft Fair	10th	Fun for all the family	Standedge Visitor Centre	01484 844298
	Teddy Bear's Picnic	10th	Fun for all the family	Anderton Boat Lift	01606 87286
	Thameside Canal Festival	11th - 13th	Canal festival	Portland Basin, Huddersfield	0161 320 9608
	Doncaster Country Faire	17th	Fun for all the family	Cusworth Hall, Doncaster	01302 340610
	Standedge Summer Fun	19th - 31st	Fun for all the family	Standedge Visitor Centre	01484 844298
	IWA National Waterway Festival	22nd - 25th	Fun for all the family	Beale Park, Near Reading	0870 2402438
	Fun at the Locks	23rd - 24th	Fun for all the family	Mon & Brec Canal	02920 888681
	Whitchurch Rally	23rd - 24th	Annual boat rally	Whitchurch Arm, Llangollen Canal	01244 390372
	Bank Holiday Bonanza	23rd - 25th	Fun for all the family	Standedge Visitor Centre	01484 844298
	Sea Fever Festival	30th - 31st	Annual festival	Hull Marina	01482 330506
	Red Bull Open Weekend	30th - 31st	Canal festival	Red Bull Wharf	01782 785703
	Wychnor Boat Festival	30th - 31st	Canal festival	Wychnor, Trent & Mersey Canal	07778 668388
SEPTEMBER	Northwich on Water	6th	Annual festival	Anderton Boat Lift	01606 872868
	Stourport-on-Severn Carnival	6th	Annual carnival	Stourport-on-Severn, River Severn	01299 877661
	Pewsey Wharf Waterside Carnival	6th - 7th	Annual canal carnival	Pewsey Wharf, Kennet & Avon Canal	01672 564020
	Slough Canal Festival	6th - 7th	Annual canal festival	Bloom Park, Slough, Grand Union Canal	01753 875571
	Angel Canal Festival	7th	Annual canal festival	City Road Lock, Islington, Regent's Canal	020 7267 9100
	Saltaire Canal Festival	8th - 21st	Annual canal festival	Saltaire Village, Leeds & Liverpool Canal	01274 611303
	Ellesmere Festival	12th - 14th	Annual canal festival	Ellesmere, Llangollen Canal	01244 390372
	Black Country Boating Festival	13th - 14th	Boat rally	Windmill End, Netherton, Dudley Canal	01384 397204
	Heritage Open Days	13th - 14th	Historic opening and sites	Various sites	01923 201120
	Southampton Boat Show	13th - 22nd	National exhibition	Southampton	01784 223600
	Burton Festival	20th	Annual canal festival	Burton, Trent & Mersey Canal	01283 790236
	Millennium Ribble Link 1st Birthday	20th	Celebration	Millennium Ribble Link Canal Basin	01524 751888
	World Canal Conference	24th	International event	Glasgow	0141 332 6936
	Banbury Canal Day	28th	Canal celebration	Banbury, Oxford Canal	01788 891555

For further events details, please contact BW's Customer Service Centre on 01923 201120 or visit the BW website www.britishwaterways.co.uk

FISHERMAN'S FRIEND

THE NATIONAL FEDERATION OF ANGLERS

THE GOVERNING BODY FOR FRESHWATER ANGLING

We've all heard the saying 'there are plenty more fish in the sea'. Well, this phrase should have said '... and inland waterways' as there are plenty more fish in canals and rivers, and with that, plenty of people who enjoy fishing on them!

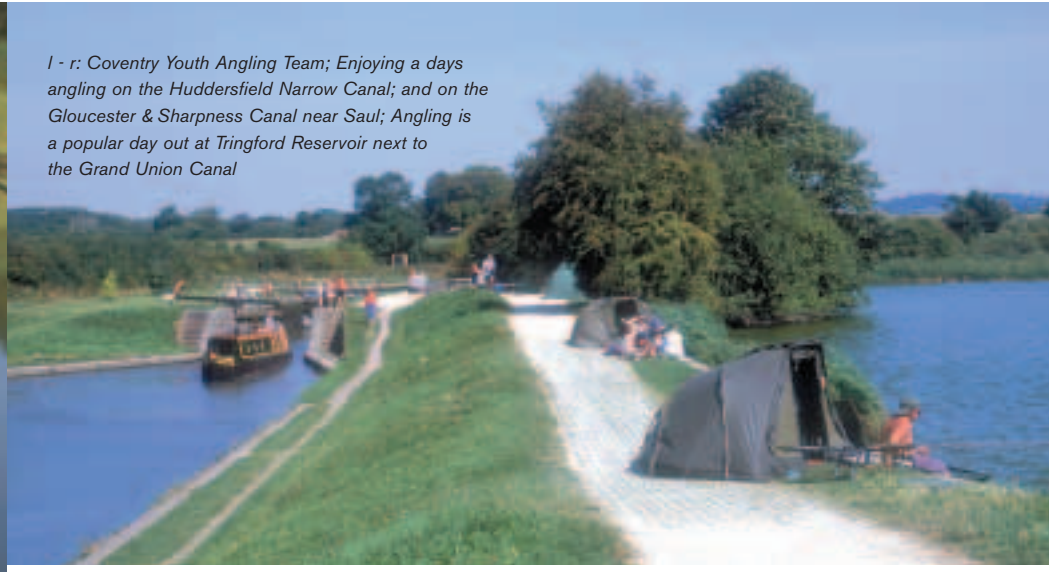
Angling on canals and rivers has always been a popular pastime, and when the artificial canals and reservoirs were first built over 200 years ago they were filled with fish from feeder streams. Towards the end of the eighteenth century anglers from inland towns and cities had ever-increasing areas of fishable waters to use as the network expanded, and canal companies and local landowners earned extra income from this.

Today BW is the UK's largest owner and manager of coarse fisheries. Stretches of water are usually leased to angling clubs, who control day-to-day fishing. The main canal network is managed as a traditional mixed coarse fishery and is noted for its roach, carp, bream, gudgeon and perch angling – as well as other species such as the alien zander. The river navigations, reservoirs, offline fisheries and feeder streams support different types of fishery, with some reservoirs managed as specialist fisheries.

The National Federation of Anglers (NFA) is the body that promotes and governs angling on inland waterways in England and Wales. Zoë Hughes spoke to Rodney Coldron from the NFA to find out a bit more about their work.

"The NFA looks out for the current and future well being of angling as well as promoting the sport and protecting angling for both individuals and angling clubs" explains Rodney. "The NFA was set up in 1903 by eight clubs after a meeting in Birmingham. We currently have 280,000 members, and believe that everyone should have opportunity to access the tranquil sport of angling."

With over 3.3 million anglers in this country, it is Britain's biggest participant sport, and inland waterways are a prime get-away-from-it-all destination for some quiet, relaxing fishing. "We had a bit of boost recently," says Rodney. "The Minister for Sport, Rt. Hon. Richard Caborn MP, visited us and commended our work in finding new angling partners.



l - r: Coventry Youth Angling Team; Enjoying a days angling on the Huddersfield Narrow Canal; and on the Gloucester & Sharpness Canal near Saul; Angling is a popular day out at Tringford Reservoir next to the Grand Union Canal

It's the first time in a century that we've been visited by the Minister, so we were very excited."

TRY IT BEFORE YOU BUY IT

To help promote the sport to more people, the NFA hold a number of 'Taster Sessions'. These sessions are organised at locations around the country, and give people the opportunity to have a go at angling. "We also provide a service to clubs and fisheries as and when they stage 'open day' activities and festivals," explains Rodney, "and we like to offer our services free of charge wherever possible."

Last year, the NFA joined forces with BW and the Environment Agency (EA) to host 'fishing fun days' as part of the 'Aquafest' events along the Ashton Canal in East Manchester. Over 200 people joined in to try and tease out 'the big catch' under expert tuition. The winner of the biggest catch of the day was a Mr John Ross, of Ashton-under-Lyne, who caught a total of 5.74kg of bream and quality roach, winning the £2002 donated by Dew Pitchmastic.

FISH'O'MANIA

As well as coaching-tuition fun days, there are also a number of competitions held each year, one of the main contenders being 'Fish'O'Mania'. The qualifying matches for Fish'O'Mania will run from 19th April to 20th July and are expected to attract around 1,600 anglers fishing for a place in the coveted sixteen pegs finale at Hayfield Lakes, Doncaster on 2nd August this year.

"For the more experienced angler we have numerous competitions, both at regional and national levels, for teams and individuals" describes Rodney. "Although competitive angling is not everyone's idea of fun, there are many anglers who enjoy the buzz and added challenge that matches offer."

ANGLING FOR ALL

Angling is one of the few outdoor activities that less able-bodied people can participate in alongside able-bodied people. There are many sites in England, Scotland and Wales with special facilities to accommodate a wheelchair. "The NFA is committed to working with fisheries owners like BW and angling clubs to identify the areas which stop people in wheelchairs going fishing" says Rodney. "Our aim is to eliminate these barriers so that even more people can enjoy the sport."

According to recent reports by the EA even more people are enjoying angling. The sales of rod licences for the first part of the year were 22% higher than for the equivalent period last year and halving the price of a junior licence has proved popular, with a 33% increase in sales.

GETTING LEGAL

Angling is a licensed sport, which means you have to purchase an EA rod licence before you go fishing, unless you are under 12 years of age. You must remember that most fisheries are owned or leased by individuals, clubs or other organisations, who may require you to purchase a permit or day ticket to allow you the rights to fish their waters. BW lease out their waters to angling clubs where permits are sold - for further details please contact BW's Customer Service Centre on 01923 201120 or email enquiries.hq@britishwaterways.co.uk

A full season's licence costs £22, and can be purchased over the phone on 0870 1662662 or at any Post Office in England & Wales.

NFA MEMBERSHIP

For just £15 for a year's subscription, £10 of which goes to your chosen area to support angling, you can become a member of the NFA. You also become eligible to receive discounts from a host of companies.

It goes without saying that the towpaths are used by many people for many different reasons - boating, walking and cycling as well as fishing. To enable everyone to enjoy the waterways safely, BW produces guidelines, 'The Waterways Code', and copies are available from the Customer Service Centre.

Other organisations anglers might be interested are the National Association of Fisheries and Angling Consultatives (NAFAC) on 01553 829411, and the Anglers Conservation Association (ACA) on www.a-c-a.org

For further details contact the National Federation of Anglers, on 01283 734735 or email: info@nfadirect.com website: www.nfadirect.com

THINGS THAT GO BUMP ON

WITH A RICH HISTORY SPANNING MORE THAN TWO CENTURIES IT'S NOT SURPRISING THAT CANALS AND RIVERS REPUTEDLY PLAY HOST TO HUNDREDS OF GHOSTS.

Throughout the country, tunnels, locks, bridges and secluded, shady sections of the cut have a reputation for harbouring uncanny and unearthly visitors. Spectres include a murdered Welsh princess on the Montgomery Canal, a shrieking female boggart (who might just cook your breakfast if she takes a liking to you) on the Trent & Mersey Canal and a terrible entity on the Shropshire Union Canal said to be covered in shaggy black matted fur!

And if that's not enough to make your hair stand on end, there are also stories of phantom tunnels, invisible clip-clopping horses and silent ghostly boats.

Britain's inland waterway network has been travelled and worked by people for nearly two centuries - the perfect recipe for some spine-tingling tales of the unexpected. Built by hand the tunnels, bridges, aqueducts, stables, inns, locks and lock keepers' cottages of the waterways have played an important role in our social and industrial history. Many believe that the hardy souls who built and toiled on the network have left an indelible trace in its very fabric.

If you've felt a shiver up your spine or seen a man who wasn't quite there then read on, you may not have been the only one.

GRAND UNION CANAL

Midway through Blisworth tunnel, near Stoke Bruerne in Northamptonshire, a mysterious candlelit phantom fork appears. This is thought to mark the spot where a rockfall halted the construction of the tunnel in the late eighteenth century. The tunnel was later continued, though a new channel had to be cut through more stable rock. 14 navvies died in the collapse – they worked by candlelight.

LLANGOLLEN CANAL

On moonlit nights an eerie figure can be seen gliding along the towpath on the towering Pontcysyllte Aqueduct.

MONTGOMERY CANAL

At Burgedin the newly refurbished BW office, formerly a lock keeper's cottage, is reputedly haunted by the ghost of an early Welsh princess named Eira. The cottage was built on the site of a building where the girl is said to have been walled up alive as punishment for running away with her lover.

TRENT & MERSEY CANAL

Harecastle Tunnel on the Trent & Mersey Canal is reputedly haunted by a shrieking female boggart named Kit Crewbucket. However, boatmen believed that if Kit took a liking to you, she would also cook your breakfast! Kit is also said to be seen at Crick Tunnel on the Grand Union Canal Leicester Line.

Saltersford Tunnel on the Trent & Mersey Canal near Barnton is thought to be one of the most haunted tunnels on the network. Its reputation was such that boatmen feared to tackle it alone.

Also on the Trent & Mersey Canal, the so-called 'bloody steps' are haunted by Christina Collins. She was murdered on 17th June 1839 at the age of 37 and her body was found in the canal at Brindley Bank near Rugeley. As Christina's body was dragged from the water her blood ran down a flight of sandstone steps leading from the canal. Today, it is said, the stain occasionally re-appears and the site is generally believed to be haunted.

Still on the Trent & Mersey, at Astley in Manchester, a mysterious grey lady appears to be searching for something. She is thought to be the ghost of 18-year-old Ann Mort who died of a broken heart when her parents banished her Catholic suitor.

At Buttermilk Bridge on the Trent & Mersey Canal a grotesque cackling figure draped in black is thought to be the spectre of a woman who sold buttermilk to the navvies constructing the canal.

At Chester's old Northgate where the canal was dug into part of the town's moat, a Roman centurion can sometimes still be seen guarding the entrance to the city.

SHROPSHIRE UNION CANAL

Picturesque and heavily wooded, the Shropshire Union Canal, in the shadow of the mysterious Wrekin, has the reputation of being haunted at various points in its long remote cuttings.

At double-arched Bridge 39 on the Shropshire Union Canal a hideous black being is said to manifest itself. This is supposedly the ghost of a boatman drowned here in the nineteenth century.

A famous sighting of the ghost occurred in 1879 when a labourer was employed to take a cart of luggage from Ranton in Staffordshire to Newport in Shropshire. He was late on his return journey, his horse was tired and it was about 10pm in the middle of a bleak January night when he arrived at the place where the road crossed the canal. Just before he reached the canal bridge a strange black shaggy creature with enormous eyes sprang out of the shrubs beside the road and landed on the back of the horse. The man tried to push it off with his whip, but when he

THE TOWPATH...

BRITAIN'S INLAND WATERWAY NETWORK HAS BEEN TRAVELLED AND WORKED BY PEOPLE FOR NEARLY TWO CENTURIES - THE PERFECT RECIPE FOR SOME SPINE-TINGLING TALES OF THE UNEXPECTED.

lashed out he was horrified to see the whip pass right through the creature. The labourer fell the to ground in fright and the horse galloped off into the darkness with the thing still clinging to its back.

The man was so frightened that he took to his bed for several days, and when he finally went back to the canal he found the whip, just where he had dropped it.

In fact the labourer had met a well-known local phantom known as "The Monkey Man" – said to appear regularly at the bridge ever since a man drowned in the canal there.

Betton Cutting on the Shropshire Union has always had a dark reputation among boating people. Various witnesses have spotted a shrieking spectre there. A more recent apparition on the same canal is the American pilot who crashed his plane at Little Onn beside the canal during the Second World War.

FALKIRK

It's worth noting that ghosts have a habit of colonising new waterway structures too. At BW's brand new, futuristic Falkirk Wheel boat lift linking the Forth & Clyde and Union canals in Scotland, several workmen involved in the construction reported seeing a mysterious figure dressed as a centurion. The aqueduct leading to the wheel is entered via a new tunnel – cut beneath the Roman Antonine Wall!

SEND IN YOUR TALES

We know there are plenty of well documented waterway ghost stories out there on the cut, but we suspect that there are many other chilling tales that remain unrecorded - some handed down through generations, others perhaps experienced first hand. Perhaps you have felt or seen something spooky in the course of your travels, or possibly you have listened to a particularly ghoulish tale beside the fire of one of the historic pubs and inns along the waterways?

BW and The Waterways Trust plan to collect these spectral stories for a unique book and possible exhibition and that's where they need your help!

If you have a waterway ghost story to tell, email it to haunted@thewaterwaystrust.co.uk or write to Haunted Waters, The Waterways Trust, The Trust House, Church Road, Watford WD17 4QA.

THEN AND NOW

MANCHESTER

During the Industrial Revolution, Manchester became the central hub for many smaller industrial towns. Sitting in the foothills of the Pennines, and close to the port of Liverpool, Manchester was the natural link between the coast and the towns of Yorkshire and Lancashire.

The growth of the cotton and textiles industry meant that the production of goods was increasing rapidly and during the late 1700s families moved from the countryside to the towns, lured by this new industrial way of life. However, the new residents soon realised that the reality of living and working in the mills and factories was pretty grim. Workers had to cope with dangerous working conditions and long tiring hours, as well as living in cramped slums. In contrast the owners of the factories were doing very well out of the industrial age and soon realised that they needed a quick and reliable transport system to support their growing businesses - enter the canals.

THE DUKE OF BRIDGEWATER LEADS THE WAY

In 1763, industrial leaders were immediately impressed by the Duke of Bridgewater's brainwave to build a canal to transport coal from his mines in Worsley to nearby Manchester.
The Bridgewater Canal paved the way for others and very soon groups of businessmen were forming canal companies of their own. The Rochdale Canal reached out to Yorkshire, whilst the Manchester, Bolton & Bury Canal and the Ashton Canal linked the towns of Lancashire to the waterway trading network.
A web of canals quickly opened in the Manchester area, creating a waterway network to link Manchester to the mills and factories beyond.

THE MANCHESTER, BOLTON & BURY CANAL

An Act of Parliament was passed in 1791 for the building of a canal from Salford which would fork, one branch going to Bolton and the other to Bury. The Manchester, Bolton & Bury Canal opened in 1796, and a junction with the River Irwell was completed in 1808. The canal was mainly used for coal carrying and in its early years it did well running passenger services.

THE ASHTON AND ROCHDALE CANALS

The Ashton Canal was the work of more mine owners who joined forces in 1792 to create their own link to Manchester. The canal was completed in 1796 and in 1800 a link was made at Piccadilly Basin in the heart of Manchester with the Rochdale Canal. The Rochdale Canal had proved difficult to realise but by 1799 the canal was open from Manchester to Rochdale and from Sowerby Bridge to Todmorden. The Rochdale Canal made a link with the Bridgewater Canal, meaning goods could travel from Yorkshire through to the Mersey and to the port of Liverpool.

Clockwise: David Beckham with young Kirsty Howard handing over the Commonwealth baton to HRH the Queen; The Waterfire carnival parade in July 2002; Floating balks going to a wood yard by North Crescent Bridge, in Salford; People enjoying a boat trip during the height of the canal in the 19th century from Bury Wharf on the Manchester, Bolton & Bury Canal; Breach at Little Lever on the Manchester, Bolton & Bury Canal during the decline of the canal in 1936.

In and around Manchester scores of volunteers, local authorities, regional agencies and trusts together with BW have been working hard to restore derelict waterways to their former glory.

A ring of canals had been created to link the busy industrial towns of the North West, but the exorbitant duties and levies at the Port of Liverpool led Manchester industrialist Daniel Adamson to put forward radical new plans for a Manchester Ship Canal. Inspired by the Suez Canal, the business leaders of Manchester wanted ships to be able to trade directly with Manchester avoiding the port of Liverpool. This was a costly scheme taking many years to gain approval and then to build. Under the supervision of the celebrated engineer Thomas Walker, and costing a staggering £15 million to build, the Ship Canal opened in 1894.

DECLINE & CANAL CLOSURES

By this time the railway age had begun, rivalling the canals for speed of transporting firstly passengers and then goods. The canals in and around Manchester began to suffer, although the Manchester Ship Canal still flourished. The closure of mines led to less freight traffic and slowly the canals fell into disrepair. The Manchester, Bolton & Bury Canal was abandoned in 1961, the last cross Pennine journey on the Rochdale Canal was in 1937, with most other sections closed by 1952, and the Ashton Canal began to close sections between 1932 and 1962.

The canal branches that passed through the city centre were filled in with rubble and covered in tarmac leaving just two inches of water, closing them to navigation. Other sections of the canals were blocked off, with some sections being built over by the latest form of transport, motorways.

RESTORATION

In recent years this has all turned around. In and around Manchester scores of volunteers, local authorities, regional agencies and trusts together with BW have been working hard to restore derelict waterways to their former glory.

There has been a massive restoration project that saw the completion and reopening of the Rochdale Canal in July 2002. The scheme cost £23.8 million and has brought with it new jobs, opportunities and leisure facilities. Restoration of the Manchester, Bolton & Bury Canal is well underway, and volunteers who tirelessly campaigned and worked on the maintenance of the Ashton Canal from the 1970s onwards have been rewarded by the continual improvements made to the waterway. Over the past two years a series of improvements have been made including towpath upgrades, lighting and CCTV.

More recently Manchester hosted the Commonwealth Games in July 2002. The Games acted as a much-needed catalyst for regeneration and restoration in east Manchester and the canals were seen as a focal point. As the Sport City complex was developed, projects along the canal were also created. Jobs for local people on the waterways, education programmes, access to leisure facilities and even local angling groups have been set up. But most importantly the people of Manchester and the communities who live alongside the canals have really taken ownership of them.

A grand finale to the recent restoration works and community activities was the Aquafest of July 2002, culminating in the Waterfire event, a waterside carnival in partnership with the East Manchester Forum.

The results of Manchester's continuing regeneration are clear for all to see; new developments are underway along the canals, and warehouses and derelict sites are being restored. The scheme expects to generate £180 million in private development investment, 1,300 new homes and 6,000 new jobs as well as training opportunities. Manchester is once again undergoing development and change on a grand scale, just as it did all those years ago.

IT'S A LOCKS LIFE

Lock gate making and fitting is an extremely skilled traditional trade that remains essential to the maintenance of the waterway infrastructure

Think of Leonardo da Vinci and you'll probably then think automatically of the Mona Lisa…but in fact da Vinci was far more than an artist. He was also a scientist and an inventor, with a fascination for water, and was even consulted regarding early canal engineering.

In his role as an inventor, da Vinci invented hinged lock gates that met at an angle, forming a watertight joint caused by the pressure of water on their mitred edges. The first locks to be constructed using this system were built in 1497, and today, over 500 years later, his design, known as the mitre lock gate, is still in use on BW's waterways.

FROM WOOD TO METAL TO WOOD…

For most of the canal age lock gates were built of timber - oak, elm and greenheart. Recently many have been constructed of steel or cast iron, but unfortunately, although they are just as strong as timber and initially cheaper, they are more difficult to manage and repair. Once metal bends it stays bent, whilst wood will give a little but spring back to shape afterwards. For these reasons, timber gates are again in regular production. Unconditioned timber is generally used in lock gate manufacture, as it gives the easiest grain to work with. In recent years BW has actively moved towards purchasing its timber from sustainable sources and over the next few years more timber will come from certified sustainable sources.

One of the oldest sets of lock gates on BW's system is a set of cast iron lock gates at Hillmorton, on the North Oxford Canal. The gates are believed to date back to around 1840, when the locks were built. Last repaired between 30 and 35 years ago, they are now in need of repair again and will have to be sent away to have the necessary work carried out. This will mean a temporary set of wooden gates being installed. Simon Jones, BW Waterway Engineer, said, "The cast iron gates are an important feature of the heritage associated with the Oxford Canal, one of the earliest commercial navigations. It is important that we

Clockwise: Jeff Dugmore making lock gates at Bradley Workshop; Arch made from old lock gates at the Earth Centre in Doncaster; Boats travelling through locks at Hatton on the Grand Union Canal; Lock near Welshpool on the Montgomery Canal; Lock 30 at Lowsonford on the South Stratford Canal.

One of the oldest sets of lock gates on BW's system is a set of cast iron lock gates at Hillmorton, on the North Oxford Canal. The gates are believed to date back to around 1840, when the locks were built.

conserve its history as best we can. The paired locks at Hillmorton would have been an important feature of the canal, helping to speed traffic from the Midlands through to London. By preserving features such as the cast iron gates it is possible for the visiting public to better visualise the history of the waterway, the changing technology of the time and its use."

MANUFACTURE

Lock gates may be just big waterproof doors, but they have to control huge water pressures and are constructed to be extremely strong. To be waterproof they also need to be built very precisely, fitting tightly to the masonry of the lock walls and to each other. Each of the 1,529 locks on BW's network is unique, so never get two lock gates that are the same. The entire structure has to be carefully balanced and pivoted so it can be opened and shut by a single person safely. Lock gates are expected to survive for a long time, typically around 20 to 25 years, although obviously gates on busier locks are more likely to suffer damage and may have a shorter life span. Lock gate making and fitting is an extremely skilled traditional trade that remains essential to the maintenance of the waterway infrastructure. At BW's Bulbourne workshop, near Tring in Hertfordshire, a staff of 12 make an average of 35 sets of gates each year, whilst seven manufacturing staff at the Bradley workshops manufacture around 58 gates per year. BW's largest workshop, at Stanley Ferry, which has 17 production staff, can manufacture anything up to 80 lock gates each year, although obviously the dimensions of the gate being manufactured will affect this total dramatically.

WHAT HAPPENS TO LOCK GATES ONCE THEY'RE PAST THEIR SELL BY DATE?

From April 2001 to April 2002 a total of 271 lock gates were replaced across BW's network. So what happens to the old lock gates, once they've been replaced? Previously, a significant proportion of gates would have been cut up and used as firewood, but BW is currently looking into 'greener' ways of disposing of unwanted timber. Sometimes old lock gates are sold on to local organisations, such as schools, for a small contribution. A large number are sold on to contractors who strip them down and sell on, or dispose of, the timber, which can be used for a variety of things. The Earth Centre in Doncaster has used BW's lock gates as a feature (pictured above). Lock gates can also make attractive and unusual garden features – The Galleon Public House, near Milton Keynes, has a sunken lock gate in its garden, and on the Grand Union Canal the bench beside Lock 8 on the Buckby Flight has been made from a recycled lock gate. With a little imagination the possibilities are endless.

Wooden lock gate making can be seen by the public at BW's workshops on a limited number of open days each year, at Bradley near Birmingham, at Stanley Ferry in Yorkshire and at Bulbourne in Hertfordshire.

For more information call BW's Customer Service Centre on 01923 201120.

THE KENNET & AVON CANAL

This year BW celebrates its 40th birthday, safe in the knowledge that one of its biggest restoration projects has been completed on time and to budget. The Kennet & Avon Canal is now fully restored and ready to welcome visitors throughout this special birthday year.

To celebrate the completion of the £29 million Kennet & Avon Canal project the Caen Hill Lock Flight was transformed into a dramatic 'flight of fancy' over the Christmas and New Year period, using floodlights to create the illusion of a cascading flow of liquid colour.

The Kennet & Avon Canal snakes across southern England from Reading to Bristol, passing through beautiful countryside and historic towns and cities including Bath, Bradford-on-Avon and Devizes. The canal was originally built to provide a transport route from London to Bristol. Opened in 1810, the canal benefited from the appointment of engineer John Rennie, who was also an exceptional architect. Many of the fantastic waterway structures he designed can still be found along the length of the canal.

In October 1996 after years of work by volunteers and BW, the restoration project was awarded £25 million from the Heritage Lottery Fund towards the £29 million five-year restoration programme - at the time the largest ever single award. The following years saw restoration and regeneration works of a huge scale begin, with special care taken to ensure the unique and important wildlife habitat of the waterway suffered the least disruption possible. We at *Waterfront* picked out some of the highlights of this fantastic restoration project.

CAEN HILL FLIGHT – ONE OF THE SEVEN WONDERS OF THE WATERWAYS

The £1 million restoration of the Caen Hill Flight of 16 locks at Devizes, a Scheduled Ancient Monument, began in June 2000. The work included the construction of landing stages to allow easy access for boaters, additional lock ladders to improve safety within the lock chambers, re-sealing of the side ponds to prevent leakage, lock gate replacement and resurfacing work on the towpath. This structure was recently noted as one of the 'Seven Wonders of the Waterways'.

HAPPY HOLIDAY FOR WATER VOLES

The Kennet & Avon Canal provides an important habitat for nationally endangered water voles. In June 2001 a colony of water voles was successfully returned to the canal after taking a winter holiday at Bristol Zoo. Their holiday was needed so essential restoration work could take place on their home.

The work that took place included the creation of vole-friendly banks - a groundbreaking design developed by BW conservation and engineering experts that uses coconut fibre matting to provide artificial vole burrows. The water voles successfully bred during their holiday and monitoring of the voles has revealed that the colony is thriving since their return to the canal.

RELINING THE BATH VALLEY RECEIVED THE ROLLS ROYCE

The £11 million project to reline the 10-mile long Bath Valley section of the canal was completed in April 2001 after four years of phased work. Canal relining is extremely specialised work, requiring great care to conserve the flora and fauna living in the area, as well as minimising disruption to local residents. Sections of the canal are closed and then drained. Drainage meant that BW ecologists had to find new homes for fish and waterside plants. The canal was then relined with an innovative system of layers of stone, PVC sheeting, geotextile material and concrete. Finally the canal was refilled

with water and re-landscaped with the re-introduction of preserved reeds and other waterway vegetation to restore wildlife habitat. In October 2001 the restoration programme was awarded the Rolls Royce Award for Engineering in the Natural Environment at the Engineering Council's 2001 Environment Award for Engineers.

THE OLDEST STEAM ENGINE IN THE WORLD

Crofton Pumping Station houses the oldest steam engine in the world still operational in its original building. The historic value of the building is immense, and visitors can still see how the engines do their job of pumping water to the summit level of the canal. The chimney of the station was restored to its original height of 82ft after being halved in the 1950s for safety reasons. The restoration works were undertaken using the best combination of modern methods and old techniques.

VOLUNTEERS PAVE THE WAY

The Kennet & Avon Canal Trust has been the driving force behind the restoration of the canal since the 1960s. Volunteers operate shops and trip boats and channel funds into restoration projects. Their help together with other volunteers from the local community has played an invaluable role throughout the restoration scheme. For example, children from Bathampton Primary School and BTCV volunteers planted 5,000 hedgerow shrubs and trees at Bathampton. Sixth form students from Marlborough College helped improve access to the canal at Little Bedwyn, and students from Lackham College helped plant hedges and install dog bins at the Caen Hill Flight.

We have featured just a selection of the vast number of projects that have taken place over the last five years to restore the Kennet & Avon Canal to its former glory. The best way to find out about the full extent of the restoration is to pay it a visit, and help BW to celebrate in this special 40th year.

For more information about the Kennet & Avon Canal please visit www.katrust.org or contact BW Devizes office on 01380 722859.

Clockwise: Lady's Bridge; Tom Moorhouse from the Oxford University's Wildlife Conservation Unit who worked with BW to take the water voles on holiday; Canal relining at Bathampton; Crofton Pumping Station; Caen Hill Flight lit up in the colours of the rainbow.

Shortcuts

DELVING INTO THE PAST

Apart from the fact that Anne Jeffery has to negotiate Birmingham's notorious Spaghetti Junction on the way into the office every day, she reckons that her work is absolutely perfect, "my dream job".

Anne is six months into a two-year contract on the Birmingham & Black Country Canals as Heritage Recording Officer – a post sponsored by the Heritage Lottery Fund. Based at BW's Ocker Hill office she is gathering all kinds of information on the history of the Birmingham & Black Country canals – everything from photographs to old maps, letters, journals and diaries. Anne is particularly keen to find pictures of any

buildings or locations that are now little more than a memory or place name.

She explains: "I'm trying to identify the things that are lost. In the 19760s particularly there was a post war-feeling that everything had to be new and a lot of the old factories and houses beside the waterways were swept away."

The information will go into the waterway archives at Gloucester and will be available for future students of canal history. In addition Anne plans to use the information to create booklets for schools and also a series of canal heritage walks and trails for the area.

Beginning working life as a journalist in Lincoln, Anne made a total career change when she decided to study for a degree in archaeology at Liverpool University.

"Previously the most recent era I'd been involved with was the Romans! – I've had to learn about canals from scratch and find it fascinating," she says.

Anne will be eternally grateful to all the BW men and women working on the banks whose in depth knowledge is proving invaluable to her project. "I couldn't have found out half of the things I've uncovered so far without them," she says.

If you have any photographs or documents relating to the Birmingham & Black Country canals in their hey day, Anne would love to hear from you. She can be contacted at BW's Ocker Hill Office, Bayleys Lane, Tipton, West Midlands DY4 OPX, or by email: anne.jeffery@britishwaterways.co.uk

CASTING OFF

Andrew Morton is not only the supervisor for the Fradley Waterway, but he's also the angling co-ordinator, which means that he comes into regular contact with all the boaters using this busy patch and the fishermen too. "Every day is different, bringing a new challenge. You never know just who you're going to meet," he says of his dual role.

Anglers will be particularly pleased to hear that Andrew was recently in charge of a massive re-stocking project on the waterway, introducing 2,000 chubb, 2,000 bream and 750lb of roach.

He explains: "We have a particular problem with zander here. The fish were illegally introduced into the canal system about 30 years ago and they thrived – so much so that they ate our native species. We now have a culling and restocking policy in place". Zander are sold at Billingsgate fish market in London where they fetch a tasty price. "On the continent they are a delicacy, more expensive than salmon," Andrew explains.

Andrew admits to being a fanatical fishermen himself. "I live and breathe the sport, so I can really identify with the

issues involved," he says.

He has now worked for BW for 30 years, starting off as what used to be called a 'canal man', eventually becoming a waterway supervisor in 1990. This year Andrew will be casting off to fresh waters when he is seconded to manage BW's new purchase, Makins Fishery near Coventry. "I'm really looking forward to it," he says of the 17-lake complex. "More than 50,000 people a year use it and it's one of the top four fisheries in the country so it's going to be quite a change."

RE. JOYCE

By the end of 2003, Joyce Potter will be 'at the helm' of a fleet of around 60 holiday narrowboats. Based at BW's Sawley Marina, Joyce runs the expanding timeshare fleet there for independent company Canaltime.

"This is our third year and it's just grown and grown," she explains. "We started with just 12 boats, then last year it went up to 35 and by the end of this year we should have about 60."

Canaltime works on the timeshare holiday principle. Guests buy a set number of days afloat on a boat at Sawley Marina and they are then able to enjoy regular holidays on the cut. Alternatively they can 'bank' that time and use it to 'exchange' a number of other get-away destinations, including boating holidays in the Caribbean and Australia on a catamaran.

"Lots of people who use Canaltime

come from overseas," says Joyce. "We've had Americans, Canadians, South Africans, French, Germans, Dutch, Australians, New Zealanders, Israelis and even Mexicans. It's really interesting to meet so many different people and see the waterways through their eyes."

Canaltime boats are typically 45-55 footers with all mod cons, including central heating, videos and king-sized beds.

"They are a real home from home and one of my main jobs is to make sure they stay that way," laughs Joyce.

Joyce has worked for BW for more than 20 years, the last three at Sawley Marina. Before that she was based at Trent Lock where she worked in customer relations, including events and education.

She certainly knows the patch well. So what makes someone want to swap the sunshine of South Africa, Australia or New Zealand for a fortnight in and around the River Trent?

"I think people want something a bit different," says Joyce. "If you live in a hot country then this is completely new, a holiday with an adventure thrown in."

If you would like to find out more about Canaltime, write to Joyce Potter at

Sawley Marina, Sawley, Long Eaton, Notts, NG10 3AE, or email joyce.potter@britishwaterways.co.uk

GAME KEEPER TO LOCK KEEPER

The Tinsley Flight of locks has been described as the 'gateway to Sheffield by boat'. Senior Waterway operative Martin Pollard is the guardian of the gateway, leading a three-strong team on the Sheffield & Tinsley Canal.

Formerly a game keeper on the Beaufront Castle estate near Hexham in Northumberland, Martin is very much an outdoor man. "I'd go stir crazy in an office," he admits. "I was brought up in the countryside and I couldn't see myself behind a desk. Mind you, sometimes when I'm crawling down a filthy culvert in the freezing cold I might have second thoughts."

Martin plans and helps carry out all the maintenance on his patch. That includes work on the locks, tree cutting, grass cutting, debris collection "and just about anything else that needs doing."

His favourite aspect of the job, apart from being out and about in the open air, is meeting the many boaters and canal users entering Sheffield.

In fact he's something of an unofficial tourist guide for the city. "It's really developing and is becoming a great place to visit. I enjoy spreading the word - especially to anyone who's not been up here before. We recommend good restaurants, shopping, heritage, pubs - whatever people are interested in."

One of the key attractions of the area for Martin, who moved from Newcastle four years ago, is the proximity of the wonderful Peak District. "I tell people that they can get off their boat, hop onto a tram and be in the middle of fantastic scenery in about 20 minutes – all without having to drive a car!"

Martin also enjoys contact with the thriving community of resident boaters on his patch. "They're a good bunch," he says. "Very nice to work with. We feel completely involved with the community here."

FRIENDLY RECEPTION

If you've visited BW's beautiful Braunston office recently, you've probably met Charlene Smith who has worked on the reception desk as Customer Services Assistant since September last year. In fact she has actually worked for BW at Braunston since May 2002 when she was taken on as a seasonal assistant.

Charlene is the first point of contact for the thousands of people who visit BW's Braunston office each year, dealing with general enquiries, licence queries and moorings applications. In addition she runs the exhibitions in the small gallery on the site and also organises the shop.

Charlene enjoys choosing and setting up the exhibitions on site, which range from paintings in watercolours and oils to ceramics. The gallery also houses informative displays themed on the seasons and work carried out along the waterways.

The second May Bank Holiday is usually one of the busiest times of year for the Braunston office as this is when the annual Crick Boat Show takes place. Charlene is one of the team helping out at the three-day festival.

She reckons that the best thing about her work is meeting so many different people and having to deal with such varied situations and queries. "One thing's for sure, it is never dull here," she laughs adding: "I really enjoy the build up to major events and dealing with all levels of enquiries throughout the year. It definitely keeps me on my toes! I'm not quite a canal expert as yet, but I'm certainly working on it."

Letters

Dear Waterfront

I too feel aggrieved at the ever rising licence fee, more so because my little 24ft narrowboat with an outboard petrol engine has no facilities anywhere across the canals.
Not a thimbleful of petrol to be found, no outboard engineers for repairs, no help whatsoever, yet I am charged the same per foot as any diesel driven boat.

My engine was smashed recently by thugs who stole a boat; consequently I was unable to move.

No sympathy from Mr Eye Spy Golden Eye; I got a ticket slapped on my window. Now to repair the engine, but WHERE? It all takes time, which has seen me 'moored' for a while. Yet I am not on BW moorings. Such bullying by wardens is a sign of how BW sees those who pay their wages. They seem to me to want only the smart boats of ludicrous lengths and hire boats to enjoy what is, after all, the peasants' last bastion, a legacy left by our forefathers to us all, not just the rich who a few years ago would have looked down their noses at any mention of canal living.

L. Flynn

Thank you for your letter. Whilst you have put across many points here, I'll aim to answer your questions regarding licence fees and petrol. BW believes that each licence-paying boater has as much right to use the inland waterways as the next, and each should pay accordingly. Although income gained from licence fees cannot possibly meet the cost of maintaining the waterway network, it does contribute and BW tries to make the licence system fair for everyone. A review of the licence fee structure has just been undertaken in consultation with user groups and individual boaters and became effective on 1 April 2003.

Whilst unfortunately it is not part of BW's remit to provide petrol, the possibility of identifying petrol stations close to waterways (near bridges etc) has been investigated and BW's Customer Service Centre, tel: 01923 201120, can provide a list. There now are new petroleum regulations in place set by DEFRA (aimed more at very large petrol stations) that have made it expensive to install a tank in a boatyard and being next to water makes the regulations even more complicated, which may be why you are finding it hard.

Paul Wagstaffe, BW Customer Relations Manager

Dear Editor

I am writing to tell you of the wonderful people we met on the Thames this July. My husband and I had planned a six week holiday exploring the Kennet & Avon Canal. Our first week was spent on coming up the Thames, our first time. We stopped at Windsor and Hampton Court, but unfortunately I slipped and managed to get a double fracture on my leg & torn toe tendons!

Fortunately we met lots of wonderful people who brought me books and magazines to read, others offered to do shopping for us, and helped us to find mooring by scouting ahead.

These smashing people know who they are, but I just wanted to say a big thank you through your magazine to all of them for their help and kindness.

Mrs Gillian Jones, NB Water Gypsy
Waltham Abbey

It's good to hear how helpful people were when you needed them, and I'm sure they'll all be delighted to read your letter of thanks.

Dear Ms Ross

Why oh why do you persist in this mantra of 'Slow down past or passing moored boats', *Waterfront* issue 5, page 3. This is just promoting ill manners amongst the generations of incompetent newcomers. Do what Canaltime Boat Share have done. A sticker on the stern bulkhead of their boats says correctly: "Slow down before, Before, BEFORE passing other boats."

Brian Mayland
Blisworth, Northampton

We like the Canaltime message and the crucial word 'before' will be included in the Boater's Handbook reprint. Thank you! We continue to learn and if readers have further suggestions for promoting courteous boating, do share them with us.

Sally Ash, Marketing Manager, BW

Dear Editor,
TUNNEL LIGHTS

I was interested to read Mr J Munro's letter in the Autumn edition of your informative magazine. However, I wish to relate an incident which occurred to me in the same tunnel in 2001.

I was going slowly through the tunnel as the visibility was considerably reduced by smoke. My headlamp and some cabin lights were on, but I was displaying no light on my stern. I was aware that a boat was following me as I could see its headlamp.

Please send letters to:
The Editor, *Waterfront* Magazine, British Waterways,
Willow Grange, Church Road, Watford WD17 4QA
Email: waterfront@britishwaterways.co.uk

It became very apparent that he had not seen me and I frantically grabbed a torch to indicate my presence. Although the boat immediately slowed down it unfortunately struck the stern of my narrowboat.

Once clear of the tunnel, the skipper checked my boat for damage and was able to arrange for the repair of my damaged tiller. It transpired that he had not seen me as my silhouette was invisible below his bow. He said that he only saw my torch at the last moment before impact.

I understand that other boaters in my marina have had similar instances. As a result of this incident I have fitted a light on my stern, which I am sure has already saved me from similar instances. Furthermore, I intend to use my stern light until I am directed otherwise by British Waterways.

K Rankin
Daventry

This is indeed a salutary tale and emphasises the need for great caution in tunnels. We've been grateful to readers for their comments on the tunnel lights issue and the next reprint of the Boater's Handbook will I hope help new and seasoned boaters to avoid similar incidents.

Sally Ash, Marketing Manager, BW

Dear Editor

We have been following with keen interest the recently published letters concerning British Waterways' management or rather mismanagement of their trees and hedgerows.

Here on the Llangollen Canal they insist on flailing the hedges back too far, thus damaging the main stems of the hawthorn and knocking the bark off mature oak and ash causing irreparable damage. We are engaged in a battle to persuade them to trim the hedges more sympathetically.

Joe and Jean North
Whitchurch

There are many things that operational staff need to consider when managing a hedge alongside a towpath. Of prime importance is the safety of our users and this does mean that we need to trim the towpath side of the hedge back far enough that it does not impede the passage of people along the towpath. In order that we only need to trim the hedge once a year we will trim back far enough to account for a season's growth. However another aspect that we do take very seriously is the health of the hedge and the wildlife that depends on it. To this end we work according to the advice of our ecological and arboricultural advisors. Who are satisfied that the routine management of the hedge has been undertaken in a way that is sympathetic to the hedge and its wildlife.

Stuart Moodie
BW Conservation Ecologist, Border Counties Waterway

Dear Miss Ross

In the Autumn/Winter edition of *Waterfront* (which incidentally I think is very well presented) there are a few articles which I would like to comment on. On pages 18-19 it states that BW has 4 workshops. At Goytre Wharf on the Monmouthshire & Brecon Canal there is another yard where lock gates etc. are manufactured for the Mon & Brec Canal and the Bridgwater Canal.

The solar powered pump for cattle troughs out of the canal is a very good idea. On the Mon & Brec Canal there are a lot of places where the cattle drink and tread the banks down and to a certain extent foul the water too (I am a farmer as well as a boater). I feel the cattle should be fenced off the canal with proper concrete access pads provided for them to drink from. There is one very simple yet effective system on the Mon & Brec which could be used on any canal with a field just below the water level. The large tank in the field is connected to the canal by a small culvert under the towpath with the water levels in both the same. A simple solution which also keeps the cattle away from the canal banks. In the same article about Lydney Harbour I am very glad that at last something is being done about it before it is too late.

Gerald Richardson
Monmouth

Thank you for your letter. Perhaps it would have been more accurate to say 'BW has four main workshops, plus a number of smaller ones' – we apologise for this oversight. You obviously read 'Waterfront' in great detail – your other comments are welcomed and have been taken on board.

The Editor welcomes letters from readers of *Waterfront*, but they may be edited or withheld from publication if they are abusive or defamatory.

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